

Digital Strategy 2021-2024



Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Forward by Executive Member Cllr Ash Cartman
3. What is digital
4. Digital vision and fit with corporate strategy
5. Strategy ambitions
6. How we will work
7. The model
8. Making North Somerset a more digital place
9. Improving the digital organisation
10. Staying Secure
11. Creating information out of data
12. Developing digital communities
13. Developing digital communities
14. Encouraging digital innovation
15. Success story – get connected
16. Success story – channel shift
17. Success story – adult social services
18. What have we achieved so far
19. Conclusion and measuring success

Executive Summary

- Digital is changing the way people live, connect and work.
- This strategy is about how we will deliver the services and infrastructure our residents need to thrive and live happy, healthy lives. It's about how we can serve our residents better and tailor how we deliver services to meet differing needs.
- We want to create a modern, sustainable area that is a great place to live, work, play and do business, and make sure we remain resilient and competitive in a rapidly changing world.
- We will do this as a digitally enabled council, supporting our staff and members to understand digital capabilities and providing them with the resources to achieve that.
- We will develop an understanding of the scale of challenges that relate to digital exclusion within North Somerset and work with communities and partners to address them, to ensure that all our residents can benefit from our ambitions. We will consider how we support our residents with their interaction with the digital world where poverty, inequalities and vulnerabilities exist.

Forward by Executive Member Cllr Ash Cartman

"Digital technology has transformed our lives in ways that we could not previously have imagined, and it continues to do so at a pace. The world that we live in has evolved significantly and for most of us, digital technologies have become an essential part of our lives.

Digital technology has also changed the way that people expect to interact with us and therefore we need to ensure that we meet these needs. Our digital strategy seeks to support this need for access to digital technologies and help us to be able to plan a path to improved services and outcomes for our residents."



What is digital?

“Digital means applying the culture, practices, processes and technologies of the internet era to respond to people’s raised expectations.”

Tom Loosemore

Tom Loosemore wrote the UK’s first [Government Digital Strategy](#), and served as the GDS’s deputy director for five years. He led the early development of [GOV.UK](#).

Quote from the Government Digital Service:

The world around us is digital, whether we like it or not. Government must learn how to be digital too. To apply the culture, practices, processes and technologies of digital era. To understand what they are, how they work, and how to put them to use to meet user needs. Because only by meeting those user needs will we be able to respond to people’s raised expectations and change how they feel about government.

Digital vision and the fit with corporate strategy

Our digital vision

Take a “digital first” approach to respond effectively to the expectations and needs of our residents, visitors and businesses.

Corporate strategy and the digital vision

The Corporate Plan is the council’s overarching strategy, setting out the council’s vision and ambitions for the area and the outcomes it wants to achieve for local people.

The council’s digital strategy is informed and shaped by the vision and ambitions set out within the Corporate Plan. It has been developed in consultation with a range of service managers to provide a digital framework for the organisation. As a result the strategy extends across the breadth of the Corporate Plan. The digital strategy is important because it facilitates the opportunity for innovation and efficiencies.

Corporate strategy priorities

- A thriving and sustainable place
- A council which empowers and cares about people
- An open and enabling organisation



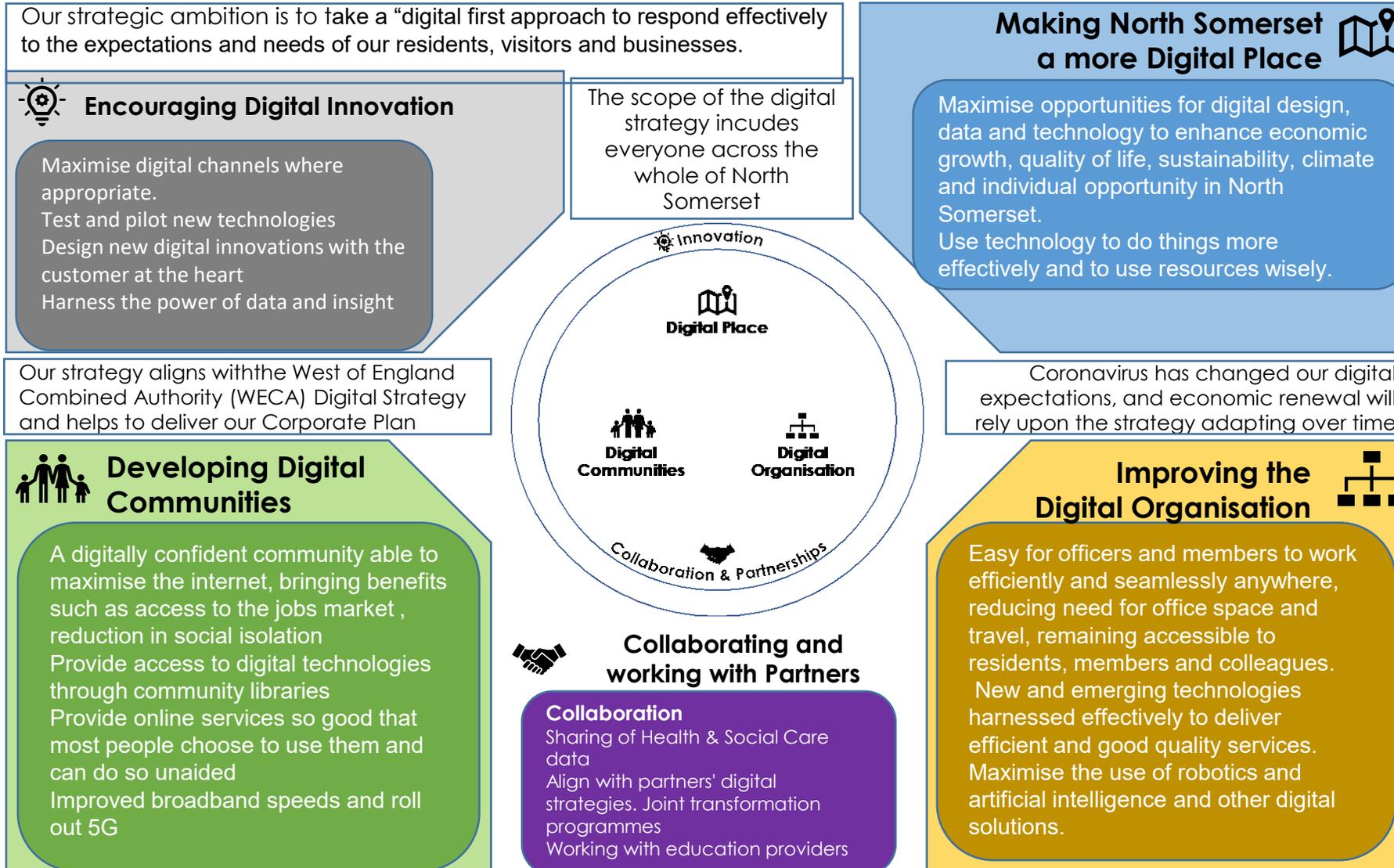
This strategy has the following ambitions, delivered together with our partners

- Residents will have a **better experience when accessing the council's services and information**, with an easy-to-use website that works on any device, digital services so good and convenient that people prefer to use them when they can, and digital communications which inform and consult them on the issues they care about
- Residents will also have access to an **enhanced digital skill offer**, helping them build their confidence in areas from basic computer literacy to enable their connectivity to online services and tackle social isolation, to skills needed for learning, education and study, through to the professional skills they need to access the jobs of the future and broaden career prospects. Alternative support will be provided for those residents who lack the ability to engage digitally.
- Residents, visitors, students and businesses will enjoy **faster broadband connectivity** through initiatives including public WiFi, free access to computers and technology through libraries, full fibre broadband rollout, 5G deployment, digital signposting and smart technology solutions that help reduce energy consumption, lower emissions, improve public safety and help make NSC a more attractive place to be
- NSC will have a **thriving business sector** supported by access to the levels of connectivity they need to grow and thrive and able to access the talented people they need who are equipped with the digital and tech skills required in our changing economy.
- NSC council **officers and members will have access to continuously improving technology** and have the skills and confidence to use it well, helping them deliver great services to residents as efficiently as possible and freeing up more of their time for frontline services
- **Partner organisations** will be able to work with the council and with each other more effectively, supported by digital collaboration tools and more open communications, and making use of shared data and digital platforms

How we will work

1. We will focus on user needs
2. We will develop and improve our services in this dynamic environment
3. We will use data to demonstrate where we need to focus and to support our decision making
4. We will share our work with others and seek to learn from others
5. We will work in partnership to achieve our ambitions

The model



Staying Secure

It is a sad fact of life that for all the benefits that technology brings to modern society, it also presents an opportunity for criminals to try and exploit systems for their own gain. We take the steps that you would expect of a local authority to protect our systems and the data that we hold in them from unauthorised access.

Responding to the pandemic in 2020 brought out the best in human nature however it also saw a sharp rise in the number of fraudulent grant applications, malicious emails containing malware and phishing attacks. The number of ransomware attacks against public sector organisations has also increased dramatically in recent years with criminals seeking only to extort money with no thought for the effects of their actions on the vulnerable who rely on public services. We will continue to work hard to identify these threats and keep them at bay.

We participate in local and national intelligence sharing forums and constantly review our approach to security. We test our systems regularly to identify any vulnerabilities we may have and mitigate any risks that we find. We process some of the most sensitive personal information imaginable entrusted to us and it is vital we ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of it at all times. Victims of identity theft will testify that it is a harrowing experience and we will ensure that as we rely more and more on digital interaction we do not compromise our security standards.

Information security therefore remains a core principle that underpins each of the ambitions presented in this Digital Strategy as well as an integral part of all projects we undertake, re-enforcing the concept of *Data Protection by Design* as enshrined in the General Data Protection Regulation.

Creating information from data

In delivering our services, one of the challenges we face is not to lose sight of the principles and practices of good information management in the face of the sheer quantity of information we generate. The modern, mobile and remote workforce requires this vital information to be available wherever and whenever it is needed and to achieve this requires investment both in technology and training. We have ambitious programmes to move us forwards so that we know:

- What information we have and where it is located
- How we can share it appropriately and collaborate with partners
- How to protect it properly
- How to manage it properly over its whole lifecycle
- When to destroy it
- How to maximise the value we get from it by combining it with other relevant information

This will not be achieved overnight however we have the right tools and infrastructure in place to move us forwards at pace.

Our ambition is to make North Somerset a more digital place

We will maximise opportunities for digital design, data and technology to enhance economic growth, quality of life, sustainability, climate and individual opportunity in North Somerset. We will use technology to do things more effectively and to use resources more wisely.

Desired outcomes:

- We enable and facilitate digitally connected new homes and communities
- We make it attractive and easy for service providers to invest in North Somerset and accelerate the installation of full fibre broadband and 5G infrastructure
- We use digital technologies to support renewable energy generation and carbon storage
- More businesses have the digital skills and technology solutions they need to grow and become more productive
- Digital solutions support the reduction of transport emissions
- Digital solutions support charging point options for vehicles

Our ambition is to improve the digital organisation

It is easy for many officers and members to work efficiently and seamlessly anywhere, reducing the need for office space and travel, whilst remaining accessible to residents, members and colleagues.

New and emerging technologies are harnessed effectively to deliver efficient and good quality services. We are well on the way to 'paperless' and 'cashless' operation, and are maximising the use of robotics and artificial intelligence and other digital solutions.

Desired outcomes:

- We use technological solutions to achieve a net zero carbon council
- The council has developed strong digital leadership within the organisation
- The workforce is flexible and mobile by default, supported by digital technology and telephony
- Appropriate technology for officers and members so that they can work effectively to achieve their objectives, with regular review and continuous improvement to meet changing needs
- New and emerging technologies are explored and implemented where appropriate
- Officers have digital access to data and knowledge in order to make informed decisions and more council data is made open as part of our transparency agenda
- Predictive analytics is used to understand the changing needs of our population and the services they will access
- Data visualisation is used to make our data and performance information easy to access and understand both internally and externally
- Live streaming is available for council meetings
- The council maximises the adoption of MS365 and intranet use

Our ambition is to develop digital communities (1)

We will have a digitally confident community who are able to maximise the internet, bringing benefits such as access to the jobs market and reduction in social isolation. We will work with communities to develop new technologies to support our health and wellbeing services.

We will provide access to digital technologies through our community libraries to enable residents to connect to council and government digital services and other digital first services, and to gain the skills to access them independently.

We will transform the relationship between residents and the council by providing online services so good that most people choose to use them and can do so unaided. We have an ambition to deliver channel shift, moving those who can and want to, to our digital channels, allowing us to provide more support those you can't or are more vulnerable. We will engage with our residents in user testing to ensure that digital technologies meet their needs.

More residents are able to take advantage of national programmes to improve broadband speeds and roll out 5G.

We will engage with our Citizens Panel using digital tools as our primary method of research.

Our ambition is to develop digital communities (2)

Desired outcomes:

- The council provides accessible websites with easy to use self-service options which are used as a preference
- The council engages with the community in user testing to ensure that digital technology meets the needs of the customer
- The council has understood what digital exclusion looks like in North Somerset and has worked with partners and communities to address issues identified locally.
- The library service is successful in enabling digital access to services and improving digital literacy support
- The council engages and consults with residents via digital tools
- Visitors can find information about the area via digital resources for tourism
- The council has a well-developed programme of maximising independence using digitally enabled technologies
- The council has developed a technology enabled care (TEC) strategy ensuring that TEC is a key part of delivering the vision for adult social care in North Somerset to improve health and wellbeing
- The council will work with care providers to encourage adoption of TEC into everyday practices
- Businesses know where to go for high quality advice and support in relation to technology adoption, accessing digital upskilling courses for their staff and understand their own future digital needs
- We will work with partners and skills providers to ensure residents understand what a career in the digital/ technology sector looks like or the digital skills they need for future jobs in our economy and they are able to access the courses they need to gain employment progress into high quality jobs.

Our ambition is to encourage digital innovation

We will use innovation to deliver better services for our residents and customers, maximising digital channels where appropriate.

We will actively test and pilot new technologies, and will work with partners to achieve this. Performance data will be available for officers to inform our decision making. We will design new digital innovations with the customer at the heart, not at the end of the process.

We will harness the power of data and insight effectively to reduce duplication and improve our services. Council and partner data sets are combined where possible to provide richer data sets to inform decision making.

Desired outcomes:

- We have an Innovation hub to incubate ideas
- We are actively testing and piloting new technologies
- Our actions are informed by insight from rich data
- Promotion of digital careers and progression opportunities such as apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and future government employment initiatives.
- Staff have smarter working tools to enable flexible working
- We will procure an innovative, developmental TEC service

Success stories – Get connected – what has been achieved

Digital Inclusion Project funded by NSC and the DWP

• Overview:

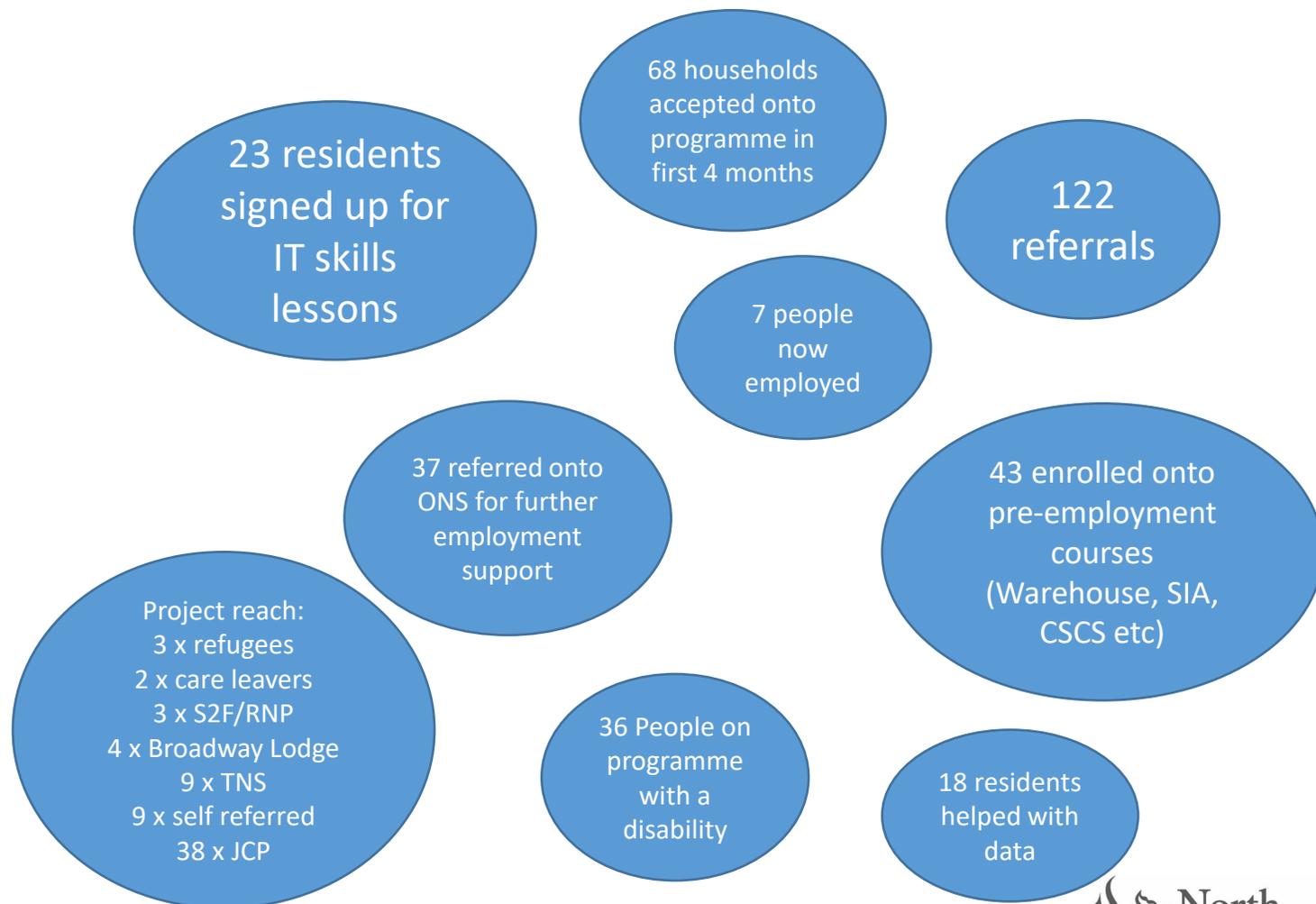
- To provide laptops/data for 12 months to help 120 households at risk of digital exclusion.
- Provide continued support throughout the 12 month period assisting with access to courses and support to improve skills and employability chances.

• Challenges:

- Poor phone signals struggling to connect with data
- Securing devices and paying for them
- Not being able to help more elderly people due to DWP targets

• Continued aims:

- Continued networking with charities and local providers to promote project
- On target to help 120 households



Success stories – channel shift - what has been achieved

Through a focused programme of channel shift we have achieved the following:

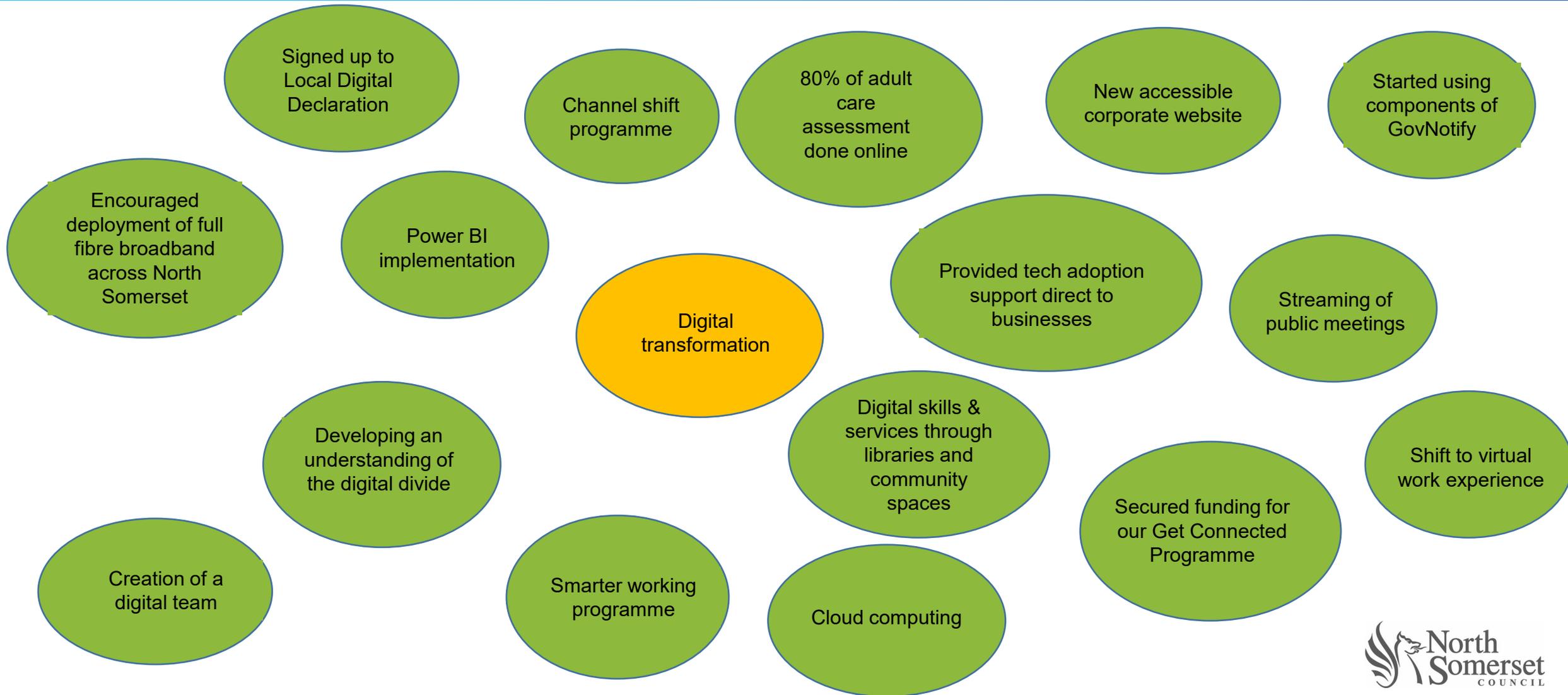
- Over 90% of residents order their bins online
- 90% of residents report missed collections online
- 71% of residents report fly-tipping online, being able to pin-point the location on a map
- 87% of resident apply for their blue badges online
- We have an average of 426 web chats with our residents every month
- We have 30,000 customers registered for ebilling
- 57% of all Benefit and Council tax customer contact transaction and external DWP transactions automated
- 57% of all council tax transactions enacted via self service tools
- 34% of council tax customer transactions are fully automated
- 100% of new benefit claims are completed via self service tools

Success stories – Adult Social Services – what has been achieved

Working with various stakeholders Technology Enabled Care projects have created the following feedback:

- Tamar Court Alexa project - “The reminders & video calling are very useful”
- Tover Tafels (Magic Tables) - “Reduction in challenging behaviour, interacting/engaging more with other service users/staff, talking more/reminiscing, improved sleeping patterns, increased independence/confidence.”
- Acoustic Monitoring - "Because acoustic monitoring detects disturbance within the room falls and incidents are prevented"
- Hydration Innovation App - "Working in partnership with North Somerset, LGA, NHS digital and the CCG has proven a benefit to the care home as we have been able to share knowledge and been considered an equal partner "
- The Wellness Service, welfare checking and TEC support - "Mr B was able to communicate with his family using WhatsApp video calls on the GDS Tablet. Mr B and his son phoned us to thank us for our help and Mr B thanked us for ‘bringing his family back to him’.
- Remote assessment - Virtual assessment achieved when face to face was impossible

What have we achieved so far?



Conclusion and measuring success

Our vision is ambitious, and we need to ensure that we measure our progress across the lifetime of the strategy.

In addition to the digital strategy, a supporting action plan has been created which will be included in the council's annual business planning framework. The plan will span the period of the strategy and will define actions by date. The framework will monitor and evaluate progress against the action plan and is reported at DLTs, CLT and to the Executive and Scrutiny Panels. Formal monitoring of the action plan will take place within the ICT Board.

We welcome feedback on this strategy. You can email digitalteam@n-somerset.gov.uk with any thoughts you may have.